

Applying The Kanter Empowerment Theory To Improve Organizational Commitment

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Abstract

Empowerment leads employees to have responsibilities by improving their working ways in order to achieve organizational goals. This study aimed to analyze working empowerment and psychological empowerment to improve nurses' commitment. In this study, the model of *Kanter* was designed for nurses in private hospitals. Quantitative approach was applied to analyze causal relationships between variables. The population were 186 nurses; and the samples were 65 nurses taken with simple random sampling. Moreover, PLS (Partial Least Square) was applied as the data analysis technique.

As the results, this study indicated that the structural empowerment was able to increase psychological empowerment. While, psychological empowerment was able to improve organizational Commitment. In testing mediation, this study demonstrated that psychological empowerment fully mediated between structural empowerment and nurse commitment. Furthermore, this study concluded that the empowerment provided nurses with higher level of responsibility and autonomy to make decisions in regard with particular tasks from the organization.

Keywords: *Structural Empowerment, Psychological Empowerment, Organizational Commitment*

1. Introduction

Organizational commitment is an essential topic for all organizations since commitment is in relation to employees' attitudes and behavior towards the organization. Meyer and Allen (1991) explain that organizational commitment is an attitude referring to the degree of staff's dedication and willingness to endure working within their organization. Therefore, a particular management system is maintained to assure that human resource development links to its business strategy and the employees have a commitment to their organization.

Maintaining employees in regard with organizational problems can be determined by empowering employees. McCarthy and Freeman (2008) state that empowerment is a conception and ability to defeat experiences and challenges with their positive perspectives. Referring to this study, the empowered nurses are indicated being highly motivated and able to motivate as well as to empower others. A research by Laschinger, *et al.*, (2001) conclude that the nurses convince that structural empowerment highly impact their psychological empowerment. In turn, the nurses develop their trust in management and ultimately advance their organizational commitment.

Empowerment is one's authority to make further considerations in order to accomplish his or her responsibility without asking for others' authorization (Luthans, 2006: 492). Empowerment is also addressed as a way to broaden employees through employee involvement by giving sufficient responsibility to complete their duties as well as to make decisions (Chaudron, 1995). In the implementation of empowerment within an organizations, there are relationships among power and self-confidence, managerial authority, and perceived commitment of contributors (Luthans, 2006: 494). An empowered working environment comprises climates of justice, respect and trust in which employees are naturally perceived to encounter job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Furthermore, the organizational commitment reveals the relationship between employees and organizations (Porter, *et al.*, 1974).

2. Theoretical Review

2.1 Structural Empowerment

Structural empowerment focuses on empowering management practices. This includes delegating decision-making from superiors to reduce the level of organization and to advance access on information and resources for sub-ordinates at the lower level within an organization (Heller, 2003 in Samad, 2007).

Referring to Kanter (1977), the structural empowerment theory is a good framework to clarify concepts in relation to negative work behavior, like employee turnover. Moreover, Kanter (1977, 1993) argues that people rationally react to situations of which they find by themselves. When particular situations are arranged in a way of which employees feel empowered, so they are likely to be more satisfied with their job and feel achieving high quality results.

Empowerment occurs when the work environment is organized in a way of which employees are allowed to do their jobs freely. Such situation emerges an organizational structure that Kanter believes. In other words, it is essential for the development of empowerment to have access for information, receive assistance, have access to resources that are required for work, and have an opportunity to learn and grow. The admittance of structural empowerment can be facilitated through formal employment characteristics. In other words, the employees' jobs are visible and fundamental to achieve the organizational goals. Furthermore, these enable employees to increase their empowerment flexibility.

Following Kanter's theory, there is an indication of empowerment in the nurse community (Laschinger, 2003). Empirically, the empowerment has linked to the organizational attitudes and behaviors, such as organizational commitment (McDermott et al., 1996; Wilson and Laschinger 1994), job satisfaction and trust in management (Laschinger et al., 2001a).

2.2 Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment is a condition in which employees need to acquire so their working empowerment actions can succeed. The psychological empowerment is a logical impact of management's efforts to constitute circumstances of empowerment in the workplace (Laschinger et al., 2001b). Instead, Spreitzer and Mishra (2002) state that psychological empowerment allows employees to confront their stress in the working situation in order to improve their loyalty to their organization, even in their difficult situation.

Moreover, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and Spreitzer (1995) define psychological empowerment as an intrinsic motivation to carry out the employees' tasks. This intrinsic task motivation is embedded into four dimensions of consciousness or cognitions that reflect to employees' adjustments on their works. The first dimension is meaningfulness that is valued as the employees' individual standard on working goals (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990). The second dimension is competence or self-efficacy. This refers to the employees' belief of ability on how they perform their office activities skillfully (Gist, 1987). The competence in this context refers to how employees can play their roles at work and how they work effectively, but not as global effectiveness. The third dimension is self-determination that employees may feel having an opportunity to decide, to start, and to regulate particular actions by themselves (Deci et al., 1989). The last dimension is impact that refers to the degree of which employees can influence to determine the strategies and the results of operations in the workplace (Ashforth, 1989).

2.3 Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment appoints employees' intellectual experience in an organization. Charles O'Reilly (1989: 9-25) argues that organizational commitment is generally assumed as an individual's psychological bond to the organization, including working involvement, loyalty and trust towards the organization. While, Sheldon (1971) defines commitment as a positive evaluation between the organization and its organizational goals. Following to Buchanan (1974), most experts set commitment as a bond between an individual (an employee) and an organization (a company). Whereas, Porter and Odom (1990) argue that employees will have higher commitment if they have three aspects, such as: having a strong desire to be the member of an organization, willing to exert themselves for organizational goal achievement, believing and accepting the organizational values. In addition, Meyer and Allen (1984) propose a term 'Affective Commitment' (AC) to demonstrate employees' emotional connection to an organization due to their beliefs and identification of organizational goals. Thus, the concept of organizational commitment has been derived as an appealing variable on its own endeavour with various definitions and measurements (Mowday et al., 1982; Meyer et al., 1998). In the nursing context, Chang et al. (2007) explains the importance of organizational commitment on nurses' working mobility.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

Organizational commitment is a condition in which an employee designates a particular organization and desires to continue his or her involvement within an organization. Therefore, the employee's higher

involvement at work means appointing to a particular work; and the employee's higher organizational commitment means taking a consideration with the organization which has recruited him or her. Then, empowerment is an effort to encourage employees to take a responsibility by correcting their current works in order to accomplish organizational goals. Through the empowerment, each employee is encouraged to have an authority to complete the goals along with their superiors. Hence, this study intends to find out the influence of structural empowerment and psychological empowerment to organizational commitment. The conceptual framework of this study is generated as follow:

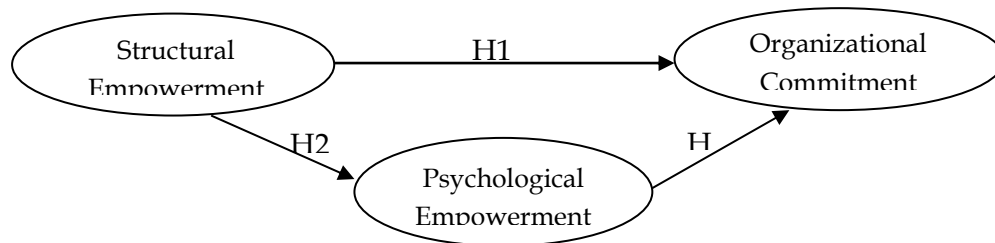


Figure 1
Conceptual Framework

3. Hypothesis

1. Structural empowerment affected organizational commitment.
2. Structural empowerment affected psychology empowerment.
3. Psychological empowerment affected organizational commitment.

4. Research Methods

This study applied quantitative approach. The population were nurses in the Surabaya Islamic Hospital who had a nursing profession titled Ners. There were 55 nurses. The sampling technique was census of which all populations were sampled. This study used primary data that were taken from respondents. Furthermore, the data analysis technique of PLS was applied in this study.

5. Research Results

5.1 Descriptive Analysis

In this study, descriptive analysis was carried out to determine the level of respondent's answers to the questionnaire items. The required conditions for empowerment referred to the theory of Kanter, including (1) opportunity for advancement, (2) access to information, (3) access to support, (4) access to resources, (5) formal power, and (6) informal power. The results of descriptive analysis showed that respondents acknowledged the variable of structural empowerment was in the score of 3.65. Empowerment in this study is delineated as a process of encouraging employees to set their working goals and to authorize their working decisions. In contrast, the formal power and informal power indicators were not responded by respondents very well.

Psychological empowerment is derived as an intrinsic motivation. This carry out tasks (intrinsic task motivation) which are embedded in four dimensions of consciousness or cognition that reflect individuals' orientation to work. Accordingly, Spreitzer (1995) formed four indicators for psychological empowerment: (1) meaningfulness, (2) competence, (3) self-determination, and (4) impact. The concepts of empowerment are viewed from employees' psychological conditions. While the aspects of mentality and self-confidence are developed in psychological empowerment. The results showed that the observed nurses responded this variable well with a score of 4.50. This meant that the respondents were identified having specific competencies to do their jobs. As nurses, the respondents had consistent roles and values to prioritize cares for patients.

Organizational commitment is an attitude that reflects employees' loyalty to an organization and that addresses a continuous process of employees to sustain their organizational life and success. Referring to Mowday et al., (1982), the organizational commitment involves (a) a strong belief in organizational goals and values, (b) willingness to work for the organization, and (c) a strong desire to maintain organizational membership. In this study, the results of questionnaires found that the nurses' organizational commitment

was in the score of 4.05 that means a high category. In brief, the respondents having professional degrees as nurses still have a strong desire to find better hospitals to work for.

5.2 Testing Goodness of Fit

The test of goodness of fit can be viewed as the results of PLS analysis with predictive-relevance (Q2). The value of Q2 was calculated referring to the value of R2 of each endogenous variable, including the variable of Psychological Empowerment that obtained R2 of 0.676 and the variable of Organizational Commitment that obtained R2 of 0.64. Moreover, the predictive -relevance values were formulated as follow:

$$Q2 = 1 - (1 - R12) (1 - R22)$$

$$Q2 = 1 - (1 - 0.576) (1 - 0.608)$$

$$Q2 = 0.8638$$

As the result, the predictive-relevance value was $Q2 = 86.38\%$, so the model was considered having a good predictive value.

5.3 Hypothesis testing

The hypothesis testing used t-test on each pathway partially direct influence. The following table presents the testing results of direct influence hypothesis.

Table 1
Hypothesis Testing Results

| Independent Variable | Dependent Variable | Path Coefficient | P-value | Notes |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|---------|-------------|
| Structural Empowerment | Organizational Commitment | 0.250 | 0.017 | Significant |
| Structural Empowerment | Psychological Empowerment | 0.537 | 0.001 | Significant |
| Psychological Empowerment | Organizational Commitment | 0.662 | 0.001 | Significant |

The results of the hypothesis testing paths of direct influence can also be seen in the path diagram image as follows:

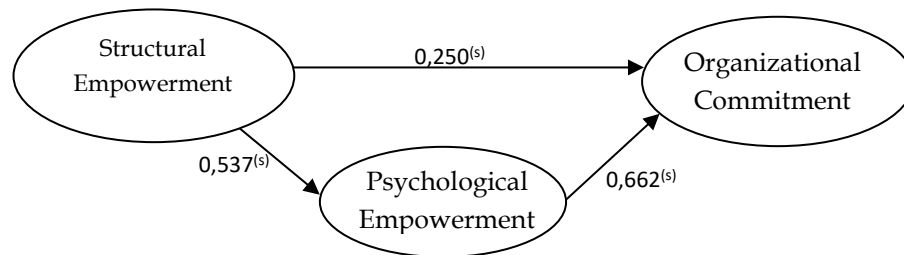


Figure 2
Hyphothesis Testing Result

In this study, the structural empowerment had a significant effect on organizational commitment. The analysis was resulted from the path coefficient of 0.250 with p value = 0.017; so it was said to be significant. Since the path coefficient was positive, it could be interpreted that the better structural empowerment indicated the better organizational commitment.

Structural Empowerment had a significant effect on psychological empowerment. The analysis was resulted from the path coefficient of 0.537 with p value = 0.001; so it was said to be significant. The path coefficient was positive, meaning that the better structural empowerment could increase the psychological empowerment.

Last, psychological empowerment had a significant effect on organizational commitment. The results of analysis used PLS and obtained the path coefficient of 0.662 with p value = 0.001; so it was said to be

significant. The path coefficient was positive, meaning that the better psychological empowerment could increase the organizational commitment.

6. Discussion

Empowerment on human resources is a very efficient tool for management that often experiences rapid changes, so its implementation will have an impact on success in an organization (Saremi, 2015). Whereas, Kanter's structural empowerment theory focuses on structures in an organization rather than on individual quality themselves (Bradbury-Jones, Sambrook, & Irvine, 2007). According to Kanter, power is defined as the ability to mobilize resources to get things done. This power arises when employees have access to information, support, resources, and opportunities to learn and grow. When this access or source is not available, so the power will stop and the effective work is impossible. Furthermore, the relations between constructs according to Karter theory is demonstrated in the following figure:

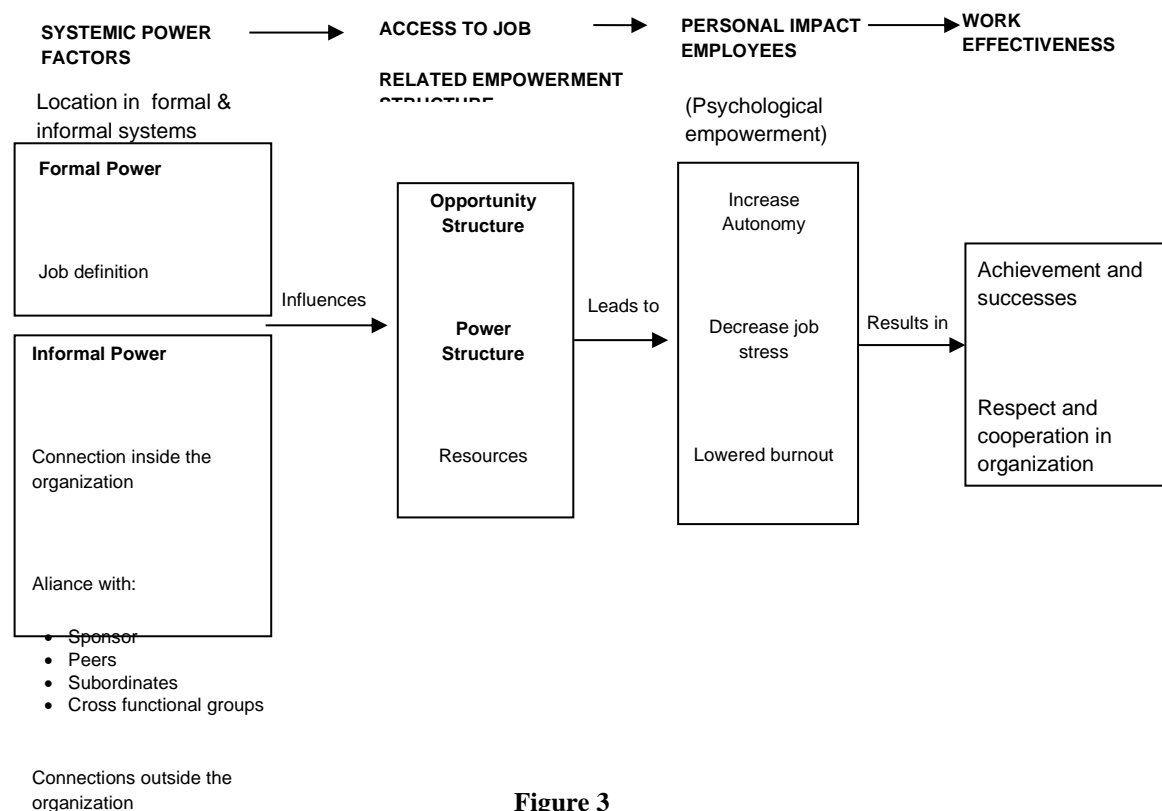


Figure 3
Relations of Kanter Concept on Structural Theory of Power in Organizational
 Source: Laschinger *et.al.*, 2001a

In this study, the structural empowerment that was applied in the hospitals would have an impact on psychological empowerment of nurses. The application of structural empowerment was reflected in the condition of hospital providing an opportunity for nurses to improve themselves. Additionally, the nurses could have access to get clear information about their work and get support from organizations in order to take advantage of various resources owned by the organization. Then, the formal and informal power occurred when nurses were able to communicate with superiors and subordinates and colleagues to complete their works. The conditions that were felt by the nurses would make nurses considering their own strengths. In other words, the nurses would feel that they had meaning as the member of their hospital. Besides, the nurses' understanding on their competence would lead them more confident in the hospital and feel more beneficial for the hospital. So the nurses would also be confident to their choice of profession as well as of organization.

Researches by Steward *et al.* (2010), O'Brien (2010), Boonyarit *et al.*, (2010) conclude that structural empowerment and psychological empowerment in practicing nurses have correlational relationships. In addition, Wagner's research (2010) has the implication that the creation of an environment with structural

empowerment is essential for an organizational strategy that contributes to psychological empowerment for nurses and ultimately leads to positive behavior and working attitudes.

Organizational commitment focuses on organizational management's attention in creating healthy organizational value by considering a balance between organizational interests and employee interests (Ward & Davis, 1995). According to Perkins and Zimmerman (1995), empowerment including organizational processes and structures can increase participation and the employees can improve their organizational goal achievement. On the other hand, this study classified that both structural empowerment and psychological empowerment had a significant effect on organizational commitment.

According to Laschinger, et al. (2001c), the nurses felt that structural empowerment resulted higher than psychological empowerment that was influenced by their trust in management and organizational commitment. Another finding of Abdullah et al. (2015) show that the dimensions of meaning and competence as well as the impact of psychological empowerment fully mediate the relationship between organizational empowerment (informal power) and affective organizational commitment. Then, Ahadi and Suadi (2014) convince that psychological empowerment partially mediates the relationship between structural empowerment and organizational commitment.

7 Conclusion

In this study, the empowerment theory proposed by Kanter can be applied to nurses at the Islamic Hospital in Surabaya. The nurses who had access to information and support and who could use resources would feel that they had higher significance. The competencies that the nurses possessed could be properly utilized in the organization. Therefore, the commitment to the organization would be created and embedded by the nurses at the Islamic Hospital in Surabaya.

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